

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 14671

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR AO

SUBJECT: AFRICAN REACTION TO ANOLA DEBATE IN USG

1. PRESENT MEDIA COVERAGE OF US VIEWS AND INTENTIONS ON ANGOLA ARE SUBJECT OF AVID ATTENTION AMONG AFRICAN AMBASSADORS TO OAU. ONE ELEMENT IN MEDIA REPORTS IS DISHEARTENING TO FRIENDLIES AND GIVES AMMUNITION TO HOSTILES. THAT IS EXTENT TO WHICH USG PRUPOSE IN INDIRECTLY ASSISTING ELEMENTS IN ANGOLA IS SAID TO BE SOLELY OR LARGELY TO COUNTER SOVIET INFLUENCE.

2. THAT ASSERTION (1) TENDS TO CONTRADICT PREVIOUS PUBLIC USG ASSURANCES THAT WE DO NOT WISH TO SEE GREAT POWER RIVALRY OCCURRING IN AFRICA; AND (2) IMPLIES THAT WE MIGHT COOPERATE WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF (MEANING SOUTH AFRICA) IN ORDER TO COUNTER SOVIETS. FURTHER ELEMENT NOT UNDERSTANDABLE TO AFRICANS IS EXEMPLIFIED IN DEC 16 PUBLIC STATEMENT BY SENATOR BIDEN, AFTER BRIEFING BY DEPT OFFICIALS, THAT EXECUTIVE BRANCH BELIEVES "A SOVIET-DOMINATED GOVT IN ANGOLA WOULD EXACERBATE BLACK-WHITE RELATIONS. THEY DON'T WANT THE SOVIETS TO INFLAME THE BLACK-WHITE SITUATION IN SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST AFRICA", WHICH TO AFRICANS IMPLIES USG DESIRE TO PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA FROM COMMUNIST AGITATION.

3. FULLY REALIZE THAT USG INTERESTS IN ANGOLA HVE MULTIPLE ASPECTS THAT HAVE TO BE EXPLAINED, AND THAT DIFFERENT AUDIENCES FOR US STATEMENTS WILL SEIZE ON DIFFERENT ELEMENTS FOR INTERPRETATION (OR MISINTERPRETATION). THERE MAY BE LITTLE THAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT THIS WHILE GLARE OF PUBLICITY IS PRODUCING
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DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF US MOTIVATIONS. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM OF

AFRICAN INTERPRETATIONS IS A REAL ONE, AND SHOULD BE KEPT FIRMLY
IN MIND.
HUMMEL

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